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ABSTRACT

In 1990, the President's Council at Miami-Dade Community College (M-DCC) endorsed changing registration procedures to eventually eliminate late registrants. A study was conducted to determine the number of students who register late, their characteristics and reasons for registering late, and whether late registrants could be expected to change their behavior if the policy permitting late registration were changed. Separate data files were constructed for students who registered during the last week before classes and those who registered on the first day of classes or later. Results were compared to a file of data on all students registered and enrolled at midterm. In addition, a survey was conducted of students standing in line to register or take a basic skills test in 3 days following the first day of classes. Major study findings included the following: (1) of the 50,461 students included in the October 1st enrollment, 19.9% registered in the week prior to the first day of classes, and an additional 12.4% registered after classes began; (2) in general, students who registered late were not pursuing a degree and were more likely to be former students than currently enrolled students; (3) late registrants tended to be part-timers, Black non-Hispanics, older than recent high school graduates, and males; (3) 58% of the late registrants were aware that they were registering after the first day of classes; (4) 26% indicated that they were registering late because they had only decided to attend M-DCC in the last few days, 16% said they had "just put things off until the very end," 17% said they had just arrived in town, and 10% reported financial reasons; and (5) 74.1% of the respondents indicated that they would register before the deadline if faced with a late registration fee, while 79.7% said they would register earlier if faced with a cut-off of registration after the first day of class. The survey instrument is included. (JMC)

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Research Report No. 90-24R

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OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

John Losak, Dean

Who Are Late Registrants and What Will They Do When Faced With a Late Registration Fee?

Late registration is an issue with a history of both educational and financial concerns. In the past, students have been allowed to register up to and beyond the beginning of classes. The rationale was to make the registration process as convenient as possible for the student and to provide a "consumer orientation". Faculty, however, have disliked the late registration policy since it causes disruption of their classes. Now, as Miami-Dade faces a budget crisis of too many students for too few dollars, the opportunity to address the long standing issue of late registration has arisen. Recently, the President's Council endorsed the goal of designing changes in registration procedures to eventually eliminate late registrants. The first planned change is to charge a late registration fee of $25.00 beginning with the next term.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions:

1. How many students register late?
2. Who is registering late?
3. Why are they registering late?
4. Will late registrants change their behavior if policy is changed?

Methodology

For the purposes of this study, "late registration" was divided into two time periods. The Committee on Admission and Registration Procedures (CARP) initially recommended that students enrolling the last week before classes began would be assessed a late registration fee. The second definition of "late registra-

tion" (and the one ultimately employed at the College) used the first day of classes as the starting point for assessing late fees.

Two approaches were used to gather data. One was to build files that contained information on all students who registered just before or just after the first day of classes for the Fall Term. The first file contained information on all students who registered between August 20, 1990, and August 27, 1990 (the last day before classes began). The second file contained information on all students who registered between August 28th (the first day of class) and September 7th. Starting dates of the courses each student enrolled for were noted to ensure that students who were designated as late registrants were really enrolling for courses that had already begun. The third file served as a comparison file and consisted of all students who were included in an October 1st Fall enrollment research file. Only students who registered and paid were included.

The file-building process provided data to answer questions about how many and who. It could not, however, provide information on motivations--on why students registered late and what they thought they would do if faced with a late fee. To answer these types of questions, we developed a short questionnaire (see Appendix A) and administered it to students standing in line to register or taking the test of basic skills in the three days following the first day of classes. Students were surveyed only on North, South, and Wolfson Campuses. Most surveys were administered in the mornings and late afternoons. Some additional surveys were left in the Testing offices to give to new students who came in for basic skills testing. Based on the number of surveys completed, North Campus and new students were over-represented. It was felt, however, that the information obtained could still be useful.

Results

How Many Students Register Late?

A surprising number of students registered around the first day of classes. Of the 50,461 students included in the October 1st enrollment, 20% (or 10,044) registered in the week prior to the first day of classes. An additional 12% registered after classes began. Almost 1 in 3 students, therefore, were registering close to the first day of classes.

By campus, North had both the greatest absolute number of late registrants for the week before classes and immediately following the first day of classes. Almost 40% (or 5,699) of their student body registered during that time period. Homestead had the largest percentage of last-minute registrants (45%). As the newest campus, however, there may be a number of possible explanations for this result, not all of which rest with the students. South had the smallest percentage--24% for the period under study. See Table 1 for more details.

Who is Registering Late?

Generally, students who enrolled late were not pursuing a degree (see Table 2). They were former students who just decided to return and were not currently enrolled (see Table 3).

In addition, the late registrants generated fewer credits since they were more likely to be part-time students (see Table 4). By ethnicity, they were most likely to be Black non-Hispanic and least likely to be Hispanic (see Table 5). There was little difference noted between late registrants and all Fall enrollees based on their immigration status (see Table 6). Late registrants, however, were more likely to be older than the just-out-of-high-school students (see Table 7) and slightly more likely to be male (see Table 8).

Why Are They Registering Late?

According to survey results, students who were registering after the first day of classes were likely to know that their classes had already started. Over half (58%) standing in line to register or be tested knew they were late for the first day of classes. Most of the remainder did not know the date for the first day of classes. See Table 9 for results by campus.

Based on the reasons they gave for registering, many late registrants appeared to be slow to act. The most frequent reason (given by 26%) was that they only decided in the last few days to attend M-DCC. An additional 16% said that they had "just put things off until the very end." The third most frequent reason given was that they had just arrived in town (cited by 17%). Only about 10% picked financial reasons (i.e., unsure they would have enough money or waiting for financial aid) as possible reasons for their lateness.

Will Late Registrants Change Their Behavior if Policy is Changed?

Two questions on the survey dealt with potential policy changes. One asked students what they would do if faced with a $25.00 late fee. The other asked students what they would do if they could not register at all after the first day of classes.

When faced with a late registration fee, almost 75% of the students said that they would register before the deadline. (Recall, however, that self-report answers often do not correspond with actual behavior). The remainder were about equally divided between paying the fee and not registering at all. There were some differences by campus with South campus students being least likely to say that they would register before the deadline and most likely to say they would not register at all. See Table 11 for full results.

Even more (80%) said that they would register earlier if faced with a cut-off in registration after the first day of class. North campus students were most likely to agree with this statement (84%) and South campus students were least likely (72%). See Table 12 for full details.

Summary

Last-minute registration is a fact of life for almost one-third of M-DCC students. In the week before the first day of classes, 20% of all Fall students registered. In the ten days following the first day, an additional 12% registered.

These are students who tend to be older, former M-DCC students who are not seeking a degree and who are enrolling on a part-time basis. Though there were many reasons given for not registering until after classes began, the most frequent reasons given involved postponing the decision to attend or to simply register. Most survey respondents (75%-80%) indicated that if faced with a $25 late fee or cut-off in enrollment, they would register earlier.

While it is impossible to tell how people will actually behave when faced with reality, these results seem to indicate that educational demands could be satisfied without sacrificing many additional students. If they are aware that they need to, most students say they would register earlier. The faculty would be pleased. So would the administration.

Table 1

Percentage of Late Registrants to Total Enrollment by Campus

Campus	Registered in Week Before Classes Began		Registered First 10 Days of Classes		Total Count for October 1st.
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
North	3,501	24.1	2,198	15.2	14,499
South	3,479	16.4	1,762	8.3	21,261
Wolfson	2,238	21.5	1,744	16.8	10,399
Medical Center	489	15.3	411	12.8	3,204
Homestead	337	30.7	163	14.8	1,098
College-Wide	10,044	19.9	6,278	12.4	50,461

Table 2

Comparison of Late Registrants
By Campus and Degree Type

Campus	Degree Type: Associate in Arts		Associate in Science		Planned Certificate		Other		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Registered in Week Before Classes Began										
North	2,199	62.8	863	24.7	0	-	439	12.5	3,501	34.9
South	2,556	73.5	402	11.5	0	-	521	15.0	3,479	34.6
Wolfson	1,366	61.1	560	25.0	0	-	312	13.9	2,238	22.3
Medical Center	46	9.4	355	72.6	1	0.2	87	17.8	489	4.9
Homestead	229	68.0	27	8.0	0	-	81	24.0	337	3.3
College-Wide	6,396	63.7	2,207	22.0	1	-	1,440	14.3	10,044	100.0
Registered First 10 Days of Classes										
North	1,224	55.7	551	25.1	0	-	421	19.2	2,198	35.0
South	1,150	65.3	153	8.7	0	-	459	26.0	1,762	28.1
Wolfson	899	51.6	387	22.2	0	-	457	26.2	1,744	27.8
Medical Center	30	7.3	284	69.1	8	1.9	89	21.7	411	6.5
Homestead	89	54.6	16	9.8	0	-	58	35.6	163	2.6
College-Wide	3,392	54.0	1,391	22.2	8	0.1	1,484	23.7	6,278	100.0
All Fall Enrollees as of October 1										
North	9,495	65.5	3,362	23.2	3	-	1,635	11.3	14,499	28.7
South	16,658	78.3	1,988	9.4	1	-	2,614	12.3	21,261	42.1
Wolfson	6,302	60.6	2,701	26.0	0	-	1,395	13.4	10,399	20.6
Medical Center	236	7.4	2,494	77.8	25	0.8	449	14.0	3,204	6.4
Homestead	721	65.7	114	10.4	0	-	263	23.9	1,098	2.2
College-Wide	33,412	66.2	10,659	21.1	29	0.1	6,356	12.6	50,461	100.0

Note: 5 AGS students have been deleted from the analysis.

Table 3

Comparison of Late Registrants
By Campus and Enrollment Status

Campus	Enrollment Status								Total	
	New Students		Transfer		Continuing		Former M-DCC Student			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Registered in Week Before Classes Began										
North	698	19.9	223	6.4	2,152	61.5	428	12.2	3,501	34.9
South	60	17.5	240	6.9	2,140	61.5	490	14.1	3,479	34.6
Wolfson	427	19.1	157	7.0	1,465	65.5	189	8.4	2,238	22.3
Medical Center	71	14.5	54	11.1	295	60.3	69	14.1	489	4.9
Homestead	56	16.6	38	11.3	192	57.0	51	15.1	337	3.3
College-Wide	1,861	18.5	712	7.1	6,244	62.2	1,227	12.2	10,044	100.0
Registered First 10 Days of Classes										
North	434	19.7	166	7.6	1,240	56.4	358	16.3	2,198	35.0
South	245	13.9	146	8.3	1,058	60.0	313	17.8	1,762	28.1
Wolfson	315	18.1	162	9.3	1,027	58.9	240	13.7	1,744	27.8
Medical Center	47	11.4	45	11.0	250	60.8	69	16.8	411	6.5
Homestead	36	22.1	24	14.7	74	45.4	29	17.8	163	2.6
College-Wide	1,077	17.1	543	8.7	3,649	58.1	1,009	16.1	6,278	100.0
All Fall Enrollees as of October 1										
North	2,796	19.3	662	4.6	9,708	66.9	1,333	9.2	14,499	28.7
South	3,922	18.5	957	4.5	14,418	67.8	1,964	9.2	21,261	42.1
Wolfson	1,697	16.3	543	5.2	7,385	71.0	774	7.5	10,399	20.6
Medical Center	389	12.1	230	7.2	2,237	69.8	348	10.9	3,204	6.4
Homestead	242	22.0	119	10.8	588	53.6	149	13.6	1,098	2.2
College-Wide	9,046	17.9	2,511	5.0	34,336	68.0	4,568	9.1	50,461	100.0

Table 4

Comparison of Late Registrants
By Campus and Full-Time/Part-Time Status

Campus	Full-Time/Part-Time				Total	
	Full-Time		Part-Time			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Registered in Week Before Classes Began						
North	1,084	31.0	2,417	69.0	3,501	34.9
South	861	24.7	2,618	75.3	3,479	34.6
Wolfson	657	29.4	1,581	70.6	2,238	22.3
Medical Center	127	26.0	362	74.0	489	4.9
Homestead	37	11.0	300	89.0	337	3.3
College-Wide	2,766	27.5	7,278	72.5	10,044	100.0
Registered First 10 Days of Classes						
North	532	24.2	1,666	75.8	2,198	35.0
South	293	16.6	1,469	83.4	1,762	28.1
Wolfson	403	23.1	1,341	76.9	1,744	27.8
Medical Center	81	19.7	330	80.3	411	6.5
Homestead	13	8.0	150	92.0	163	2.6
College-Wide	1,322	21.1	4,956	78.9	6,278	100.0
All Fall Enrollees as of October 1						
North	5,604	38.7	8,895	61.3	14,499	28.7
South	7,856	37.0	13,405	63.0	21,261	42.1
Wolfson	3,850	37.0	6,549	63.0	10,399	20.6
Medical Center	991	30.9	2,213	69.1	3,204	6.4
Homestead	181	16.5	917	83.5	1,098	2.2
College-Wide	18,482	36.6	31,979	63.4	50,461	100.0

Table 5

Comparison of Late Registrants
By Campus and Ethnic Group

Campus	Ethnic Group: White Non-Hispanic Number	White Non-Hispanic Percent	Black Non-Hispanic Number	Black Non-Hispanic Percent	Hispanic Number	Hispanic Percent	Other Number	Other Percent	Total Number	Total Percent
Registered in Week Before Classes Began										
North	633	18.1	1,267	36.2	1,516	43.3	85	2.4	3,501	34.9
South	1,083	31.1	336	9.7	1,975	56.8	85	2.4	3,479	34.6
Wolfson	363	16.2	272	12.2	1,575	70.4	28	1.2	2,238	22.3
Medical Center	110	22.5	183	37.4	180	36.8	16	3.3	489	4.9
Homestead	200	59.3	58	17.2	72	21.4	7	2.1	337	3.3
College-Wide	2,389	23.8	2,116	21.1	5,318	52.9	221	2.2	10,044	100.0
Registered First 10 Days of Classes										
North	352	16.0	918	41.8	870	39.6	58	2.6	2,198	35.0
South	546	31.0	182	10.3	981	55.7	53	3.0	1,762	28.1
Wolfson	296	17.0	258	14.8	1,167	66.9	23	1.3	1,744	27.8
Medical Center	110	26.8	148	36.0	138	33.6	15	3.6	411	6.5
Homestead	92	56.5	37	22.7	32	19.6	2	1.2	163	2.6
College-Wide	1,396	22.2	1,543	24.6	3,188	50.8	151	2.4	6,278	100.0
All Fall Enrollees as of October 1										
North	2,697	18.6	5,030	34.7	6,378	44.0	394	2.7	14,499	28.7
South	6,319	29.7	1,487	7.0	12,903	60.7	552	2.6	21,261	42.1
Wolfson	1,501	14.4	1,211	11.7	7,584	72.9	103	1.0	10,399	20.6
Medical Center	815	25.4	1,137	35.5	1,165	36.4	87	2.7	3,204	6.4
Homestead	666	60.7	169	15.4	244	22.2	19	1.7	1,098	2.2
College-Wide	11,998	23.8	9,034	17.9	28,274	56.0	1,155	2.3	50,461	100.0

Table 6

Comparison of Late Registrants
By Campus and Immigration Status

Campus	Immigration Status										Total	
	U.S. Citizens		Residents		Visa		Asylum		Other			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Registered in Week Before Classes Began												
North	2,046	58.4	998	28.5	154	4.4	139	4.0	164	4.7	3,501	34.9
South	2,379	68.4	698	20.1	197	5.7	71	2.0	134	3.8	3,479	34.6
Wolfson	1,148	51.3	667	29.8	49	2.2	204	9.1	170	7.6	2,238	22.3
Medical Center	295	60.3	149	30.5	19	3.9	9	1.8	17	3.5	489	4.9
Homestead	304	90.2	27	8.0	1	0.3	0	-	5	1.5	337	3.3
College-Wide	6,172	61.4	2,539	25.3	420	4.2	423	4.2	490	4.9	10,044	100.0
Registered First 10 Days of Classes												
North	1,206	54.9	639	29.1	109	4.9	106	4.8	138	6.3	2,198	35.0
South	1,203	68.3	359	20.4	105	6.0	31	1.7	64	3.6	1,762	28.1
Wolfson	919	52.7	532	30.5	22	1.3	133	7.6	138	7.9	1,744	27.8
Medical Center	253	61.6	115	28.0	19	4.6	10	2.4	14	3.4	411	6.5
Homestead	149	91.4	13	8.0	1	0.6	0	-	0	-	163	2.6
College-Wide	3,730	59.4	1,658	26.4	256	4.1	280	4.5	354	5.6	6,278	100.0
All Fall Enrollees as of October 1												
North	8,760	60.4	4,048	27.9	617	4.3	463	3.2	611	4.2	14,499	28.7
South	14,754	69.4	4,102	19.3	1,174	5.5	515	2.4	716	3.4	21,261	42.1
Wolfson	4,882	46.9	3,419	32.9	303	2.9	927	8.9	868	8.4	10,399	20.6
Medical Center	2,000	62.4	922	28.8	101	3.1	64	2.0	117	3.7	3,204	6.4
Homestead	1,012	92.2	73	6.6	3	0.3	1	0.1	9	0.8	1,098	2.2
College-Wide	31,408	62.2	12,564	24.9	2,198	4.4	1,970	3.9	2,321	4.6	50,461	100.0

Table 7

Comparison of Late Registrants
By Campus and Age Group

Campus	Age Group												Total	
	14-20		21-25		26-30		31-35		36-40		Over 40			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Registered in Week Before Classes Began														
North	952	27.2	1,159	33.1	611	17.5	340	9.7	205	5.8	233	6.7	3,500	34.8
South	1,070	30.8	1,340	38.5	503	14.4	239	6.9	157	4.5	170	4.9	3,479	34.6
Wolfson	492	22.0	716	32.0	436	19.5	224	10.0	152	6.8	218	9.7	2,238	22.3
Medical Center	73	14.9	127	26.0	118	24.2	73	14.9	48	9.8	50	10.2	489	4.9
Homestead	74	21.9	100	29.7	66	19.6	37	11.0	30	8.9	30	8.9	337	3.4
College-Wide	2,661	26.5	3,442	34.3	1,734	17.2	913	9.1	592	5.9	701	7.0	10,043	100.0
Registered First 10 Days of Classes														
North	424	19.3	690	31.4	436	19.8	274	12.5	169	7.7	205	9.3	2,198	35.0
South	406	23.0	670	38.0	283	16.1	157	8.9	79	4.5	167	9.5	1,762	28.1
Wolfson	259	14.9	528	30.3	370	21.2	217	12.4	164	9.4	206	11.8	1,744	27.8
Medical Center	40	9.7	120	29.2	88	21.4	59	14.4	43	10.5	61	14.8	411	6.5
Homestead	31	19.0	50	30.6	37	22.7	21	12.9	12	7.4	12	7.4	163	2.6
Total	1,160	18.5	2,058	32.8	1,214	19.3	728	11.6	467	7.4	651	10.4	6,278	100.0
All Fall Enrollees as of October 1														
North	4,999	34.5	4,265	29.4	2,185	15.1	1,249	8.6	777	5.3	1,022	7.1	14,497	28.7
South	9,002	42.4	6,639	31.2	2,476	11.7	1,280	6.0	794	3.7	1,070	5.0	21,261	42.1
Wolfson	2,487	23.9	2,917	28.1	1,938	18.6	1,154	11.1	793	7.6	1,110	10.7	10,399	20.6
Medical Center	536	16.8	811	25.3	667	20.8	452	14.1	343	10.7	394	12.3	3,203	6.4
Homestead	285	26.0	312	28.4	186	16.9	121	11.0	86	7.9	108	9.8	1,098	2.2
Total	17,309	34.3	14,944	29.6	7,452	14.8	4,256	8.4	2,793	5.5	3,704	7.4	50,458	100.0

Table 8

Comparison of Late Registrants
By Campus and Gender

Campus	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Registered in Week Before Classes Began						
North	1,554	44.4	1,947	55.6	3,501	34.8
South	1,646	47.3	1,833	52.7	3,479	34.6
Wolfson	944	42.2	1,294	57.8	2,238	22.3
Medical Center	130	26.6	359	73.4	489	4.9
Homestead	137	40.7	200	59.3	337	3.4
College-Wide	4,411	43.9	5,633	56.1	10,044	100.0
Registered First 10 Days of Classes						
North	1,052	47.9	1,146	52.1	2,198	35.0
South	832	47.2	930	52.8	1,762	28.1
Wolfson	702	40.3	1,042	59.7	1,744	27.8
Medical Center	128	31.1	283	68.9	411	6.5
Homestead	68	41.7	95	58.3	163	2.6
College-Wide	2,782	44.3	3,496	55.7	6,278	100.0
All Fall Enrollees as of October 1						
North	6,224	42.9	8,275	57.1	14,499	28.7
South	9,316	43.8	11,945	56.2	21,261	42.1
Wolfson	4,058	39.0	6,341	61.0	10,399	20.6
Medical Center	845	26.4	2,359	73.6	3,204	6.4
Homestead	408	37.2	690	62.8	1,098	2.2
College-Wide	20,851	41.3	29,610	58.7	50,461	100.0

Table 9

Percentage of First-Time Late Registrants Who Said Their Classes Had Already Started

	Had Started		Had Not Started		Didn't Know	
Campus	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
North	143	56.8	16	6.4	93	36.9
South	37	62.7	8	13.6	14	23.7
Wolfson	67	58.3	13	11.3	35	30.4
College-Wide	247	58.0	37	8.7	142	33.3

Note: Based on 426 responses plus 8 missing.

Table 10

Reasons Students Gave For Registering
After the Start of Fall Term

Reasons	Number Selecting	Percent* Selecting
I only decided in the last few days to attend M-DCC	113	26.2
I just arrived in town	75	17.4
I just put things off until the very end	68	15.8
Other**	61	14.2
I wasn't aware classes had already started	47	10.9
I wasn't sure until now that I would have enough money	46	10.7
I've been waiting for my financial aid	44	10.2
I was planning to go away to school but couldn't	33	7.7
I've been waiting on my test scores or high school diploma	33	7.7
The lines are shorter now	15	3.5
I didn't need to register any earlier since the schedule of terms and courses I want are still available	10	2.3

*Based on a pool of 431 respondents.
**Included a variety of responses.

Table 11

Reactions to a $25.00 Late Registration Fee
From Late Registrants

	Would Register Before Deadline		Would Register Late and Pay $25.00		Not Register At All	
Campus	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
North	197	77.9	32	12.7	24	9.5
South	37	62.7	9	15.3	13	22.0
Wolfson	83	71.6	11	9.5	22	19.0
College-Wide	317	74.1	52	12.2	59	13.8

Table 12

Reactions to Cut-Off in Registration
After 1st Day of Class
From Late Registrants

	Would Register Before 1st Day		Would Not Register At All	
Campus	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
North	211	83.7	41	16.3
South	43	71.7	17	28.3
Wolfson	87	75.0	29	25.0
College-Wide	341	79.7	87	20.3

WP014

Date:_____ Campus:_____
Time:_____

What is your student number?_____

Are you: (pick one)
_____ adding and dropping classes that you've already registered for
_____ re-registering after your class schedule was voided
_____ registering for Fall term classes for the first time

Have the classes you want to take already started?
_____ yes When did they begin?_____
_____ no When will they begin?_____
_____ I don't know if classes have begun

Why are you registering now? (check all that apply)
_____ I wasn't aware classes had already started
_____ I've been waiting for my financial aid
_____ I only decided in the last few days to attend M-DCC
_____ I just arrived in town
_____ I was planning to go away to school but couldn't
_____ I've been waiting on my test scores or high school diploma
_____ I wasn't sure until now that I would have enough money to go to school
_____ I didn't need to register any earlier since the schedule of times and courses I want are still be available
_____ the lines are shorter now
_____ I just put things off until the very end
_____ Other (please explain_____
_____)

If you were charged $25.00 for registering late, would you:
_____ register before the deadline
_____ register after the deadline and pay the $25.00
_____ not register at all that semester

If you were stopped from registering after the first day of class, would you:
_____ register before the first day
_____ not register at all that semester

Other comments:

Institutional Research
8/30/90

Miami-Dade Community College

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